



## Auxiliary Bishop Archdiocese of Philadelphia

November 23, 2011

Dear Monsignor/Father:

Pennsylvania is on the cusp of a significant era for Catholic education. Senate Bill 1 - the Opportunity Scholarship Act - has been introduced in Harrisburg and with it brings the bright promise of meaningful education reform. The legislation calls for vouchers to help poor students in chronically failing schools choose a different path for their education and it calls for an increase to the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. EITC has helped thousands of families choose a Catholic education for their children. This proposal will help thousands more.

The entire Catholic community needs to work together to make school choice a reality in Pennsylvania. I am asking for your cooperation and participation with a statewide effort to advance a public policy agenda that benefits Catholic schools, including those in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Getting school vouchers passed in Pennsylvania will hinge on a groundswell of local support. Concerned citizens must speak with one loud voice on behalf of Catholic school students before the governor, the state legislature and beyond. Every parish and every school must get their parishioners, parents, teachers, administrators and students to contact their State Representatives.

SB 1 has already passed the state Senate and now must be considered by the House of Representatives. Governor Corbett is in full support of school choice. We are just one step away from success; here is what you can do:

- You YOURSELF should talk to your State Representative in person – visit him or her in the district office (look up the district office address at [www.pacatholic.org/advocacy](http://www.pacatholic.org/advocacy)). Or, if he or she is a parishioner, approach the legislator after Mass. Face-to-face communications are the most effective. A sample script is enclosed.
- If you cannot meet with your Representative directly, meet with his or her staff.
- Invite parish leaders to take action; organize visits to state legislators' district offices.
- Call, write or fax your State Representative or send an email through the Pennsylvania Catholic Advocacy Network at [www.pacatholic.org/schoolchoice](http://www.pacatholic.org/schoolchoice). Invite parish leaders to do the same.
- Print the enclosed school choice announcement in the parish bulletin.
- Read the enclosed pulpit announcement at Masses this weekend and next weekend.
- Put link to [www.pacatholic.org](http://www.pacatholic.org) on parish website.
- Promote school choice on social media accounts like Facebook and Twitter.
- Read the most up-to-date news about school choice at [www.pacatholic.org](http://www.pacatholic.org).

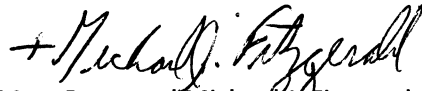
Our state legislators are home for two weeks for a Thanksgiving break. The legislature will vote on school choice when they return in December. This is the ideal opportunity to show them that their constituents care about school choice; we may not get a better chance to pass school choice for a long time.

All persons have the right to a quality education. Parental rights and responsibilities are primary. Government has a responsibility to provide adequate resources for the attainment of quality education for all children. Social justice calls us to get involved with this important public policy issue.

Your leadership as pastor is critical to the success of school choice. Thank you for your cooperation.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Michael J. Fitzgerald  
Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia

## SCHOOL CHOICE PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT

I am sure in recent months you have heard the debate in Harrisburg regarding school choice legislation. This legislation would create a more just system of education wherein students can attend the school that fits their educational needs, instead of being assigned a school based solely on geographic location.

School choice reinforces the idea that parents, not the government, are the primary educators of their children. The current treatment of children, especially those from low-income families, is unjust and inequitable. Also, I'd like to be clear that this is not a public vs. private school issue - public schools and private schools *together* fulfill the moral obligation we have to educate our children. Simply put, school choice is good for students, for schools and for the entire community.

More information about the details of school choice legislation is available in the bulletin and online via the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference at [www.pacatholic.org](http://www.pacatholic.org). I ask you to please call or visit your legislator and ask them to support legislation that includes two parts- a voucher program and an increase to the tax credit scholarships. If you are unable to visit or call, log on to [www.pacatholic.org](http://www.pacatholic.org) to send a message via email.



# PENNSYLVANIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

*The Public Affairs Agency of the Catholic Dioceses of Pennsylvania Since 1960*

## **Tell Your Legislators: Our Catholic Community Supports School Choice!**

The Pennsylvania General Assembly is now considering legislation to significantly increase the Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program and also start a school voucher program to help low-income and possibly many middle-income families. Just like the EITC scholarships, parents would be able to use the voucher to pay tuition at any school they choose – public or private.

Legislators are in their home districts from now until mid-September. Visit, call, write or e-mail your state legislators and ask them to vote **YES** on school choice. Send an easy e-mail message or look up your legislators' contact information at

**[www.pacatholic.org/advocacy](http://www.pacatholic.org/advocacy)**

### **School choice is good for parents.**

All parents should be able to select a school that best suits their children. The state should support parents in meeting their obligation to educate their children, not the other way around.

### **School choice is good for Catholic schools.**

Not every qualified student will choose a Catholic school, but it is likely that many will. The EITC program has helped our schools without sacrificing our core mission and high standards. Vouchers will allow even more children to choose a Catholic education. More students will help us keep our schools vibrant and available to everyone.

### **School choice is good for all of us.**

Pennsylvania needs a more effective and less costly way to educate our children. Nonpublic schools already save taxpayers \$4 billion/year. School choice saves tax dollars because non-public schools often provide an excellent education for a fraction of the cost of public schools, and the difference between the voucher and the cost of tuition will be returned to the state.



### **Voice your support for school choice. Make a difference for Pennsylvania's future.**

Involvement of parents, educators, Catholic school alumni, parishioners, and all citizens and taxpayers will be critical to the success of school choice. By getting involved, you can make it happen. Join our advocacy network by sending a message to your legislators at **[www.pacatholic.org/advocacy](http://www.pacatholic.org/advocacy)**.

Learn more about school choice at **[www.pacatholic.org/schoolchoice](http://www.pacatholic.org/schoolchoice)**

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